

Foreign Affairs

Barking Crayfish and the Kremlin

By C. L. SULZBERGER

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14—It is

precisely thirteen months since Nikita Khrushchev introduced crustaceology into political warfare. On Sept. 17, 1955, he was reported as having told a Kremlin audience that those who wait for the Soviet Union to abandon communism "wait until a shrimp learns to whistle."

Khrushchev based his analogy upon a Russian proverb. Since careful research discloses none relating to shrimp [*krevetka*] it is probable he was inaccurately quoted. But there are two sayings concerning crayfish [*rak*] in the rich Slavic lexicon.

The first may be translated "until the crayfish learns to whistle." The second reads: "I will do it when the crayfish whistles on the mountain-top." Those familiar with Khrushchev believe he would be more apt to use the latter form, longer, more flowery and more common.

The advent of the crayfish into ideology attracted notice of only brief duration. However, five days ago, a significant development was announced. The University of Adelaide discovered in northern Australia the existence of a barking crayfish.

This, it was said, "makes a harsh, grating noise with the stubby antennae before its eyes. This sound can be reproduced even after the animal is dead. What purpose it serves is unknown."

Unexpected Versatility

There is, of course, a considerable difference between a whistle and a bark. Nevertheless, the possibility that crayfish, even in Russia, are more versatile than Khrushchev suspected may now be causing him concern.

Certainly harsh, grating noises are being emitted from within the Soviet orbit. Whether they will ever be transformed from a subterranean bark into that shrill sound commonly defined as a whistle is a matter for speculation.

At present there is no indication that communism in its familiar, monolithic form is disappearing from the Russian landscape. Recent French visitors inquired of Khrushchev concerning eventual possibilities of a two-party system in the U. S. S. R. He replied that were his children to hear him conjecture along such lines they would remark:

Nevertheless, by no means everyone upon whom communism has been imposed by Moscow welcomes the benefits of that reactionary system. If not in Russia, at least within the satellites, the words of Bakunin, the anarchist, are remembered. He said: "No dictatorship can have any other aim but that of self-perpetuation, and it can beget only slavery in the people tolerating it."

Interrupted March

Early this year Khrushchev himself seemed to be considering this warning when he set about brutally to destroy the reputation of the greatest Soviet dictator. Some Eastern Europeans with enduring memories of individual freedom thought the new Marxist Caesar might be marching them over an ideological Rubicon.

This proved to be a deception. Khrushchev led them to the river bank. Then, instead of guiding them across, he told them to get out their fishing gear—presumably for crayfish. There they have been stranded.

The pause along the road to liberty created a perplexing paradox. One may assume it is at the heart of recent meetings among party leaders in Belgrade, Yalta and elsewhere within the confused Communist domain.

In his analysis of revolutionary socialism, Marx underestimated the significance of political power. However, in Moscow monopoly control of such power enabled communism to hold down living standards and accelerate industrial development. This method was brilliantly and ruthlessly applied by Stalin.

Khrushchev's iconoclasm, by destroying that despot's image, prompted satellite populations to believe that Stalinism's procedures and philosophy might be revised.

Further hopes were encouraged by the discovery of political dissidents.

Allowable Protests

Meanwhile, Tito, honored again by Moscow and accepted back as a somewhat unorthodox but admirable colleague, came to symbolize permissible forms of protest. It was discovered that communism's linguistic ritual allows Titoist jargon to serve as an acetylene torch applied against the ideology itself.

This highly predictable development dislodged the inner security of the Soviet bloc. Centrifugal forces, often deliberately camouflaged as Titoism, produced a resurgence of nationalist and independentist movements puzzling to the Kremlin.

Just how the problem will be solved cannot be foreseen. Tito seems to be sticking to his pragmatic guns. He continues to extend contacts and propaganda within the U. S. S. R.'s own orbit. Privately he urges Westerners that NATO should stay strong. A balance of power allows him greater freedom for maneuver.

Therefore some Communist leaders have commented to grumble. They fear that Tito may indeed be Marxism's barking crayfish. What it can whistle?